

## **“Charting the Landscape/Mapping New Paths”: Project Descriptions**

### **1. Project Name:**

National Collaboration for Lifelong Learning (NCLL)

### **2. Goal:**

The National Consortium on Lifelong Learning seeks to build a national coalition of research institutions committed to investigating the what, why, where and how to of public understanding of (initially) science concepts and research, with a particular focus on free-choice learning in out-of-school settings. The over-arching goal of this effort is to better coordinate the growing interest of a small but committed group of researchers attempting to understand the complex processes and products of free-choice science learning and to bootstrap these currently local and disjointed efforts into a single, coherent national effort. The ultimate goal of this consortium will be to build sufficient capacity, scope and scale so as to make a significant impact on national education policy and practice; education policy and practice that supports all citizens at all stages in their lives.

### **3. Participating institutions/agencies:**

Current participating institutions are:

- Institute for Learning Innovation
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Arizona
- Oregon State University
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Florida
- Cornell University

Other partners will be added, as appropriate and feasible.

### **4. Your role/expertise in this type project:**

The Institute for Learning Innovation is currently serving as the lead organization, providing leadership in the initial stages of conceptualization and coordination.

### **5. Outcomes / successes to-date:**

The project is in the first stage of organization and development. To date, initial conceptual frameworks and goal statements have been developed.

**6. Lessons learned :**

It's still early in the process, but clearly any time you attempt to organize a national coalition, particularly one involving complex institutions such as universities, considerable time and patience are required.

**7. If we began anew we would ask these questions at the beginning:**

**8. Critical success factors:**

NCCL hopes to begin what we envision as a long-term process of building the intellectual and professional capacity of free-choice learning nationwide. The ultimate vision is that efforts of NCCL will support:

1. The development of a comprehensive, empirically tested and validated model of lifelong (science) learning. A model, supported by data and recommendations, that will focus the efforts of investigators, practitioners, evaluators and policy makers and lead to ever-improved quality of free-choice education practice and assessment.
2. The development of a series of dissemination strategies designed to support better practice and policy in the area of lifelong (science) learning. These would include both NCCL-specific vehicles (e.g., a dedicated website, a high quality peer-reviewed journal devoted to lifelong learning and one or more quarterly newsletters aimed at practitioners and policy makers) as well as more general dissemination efforts such as regular publishing of articles, making of presentations and conducting of workshops.
3. Develop a comprehensive program of professional development and training for both current and future free-choice education professionals. This would be accomplished through the establishment of a multi-university, collaborative graduate and "in-service" training program designed to support everything from certification to doctoral level training.

Currently, little if any of these three necessary infrastructures exist, or if they do, they exist in scattered and uncoordinated ways. The goal of NCCL is not only to foster the creation of these infrastructures, but to do so for good of the entire nation. In order to both bring attention to the need for these lifelong learning efforts, as well as to provide a mechanism for meaningfully assessing the progress and ultimate success of NCCL, the consortium will create an annual "Lifelong (Science) Learning State of the Nation" white paper. This State of Nation document will operationalize what is required nationally in the areas of lifelong

(science) learning and in the process, assess the current capacity and capabilities of the nation's infrastructure and practice relative to lifelong (science) learning research, evaluation, programs and policy. This document will establish an array of quantitative as well as qualitative measures. In Year One it will define a baseline, as well lay out a vision/target for what a fully functioning nation of (science) learners would/should look like. As part of this process, NCLL will define its own annual benchmarks of success. This process will serve as an on-going assessment of NCLL's, as well as the nation's, growth and development by providing a tangible, measurable process by which the consortium's progress towards achieving its goals can be assessed.

## **9. Our next steps will be:**

Our next step will be to secure short-term funding, initially from the National Science Foundation, in order to:

1. Create a three-dimensional theoretical matrix of the lifelong science learning landscape that includes science, technology, engineering and mathematics content, learning settings and delivery approaches and accommodates the differing needs, interests and abilities of learners across their life time. Included in this process will be a clarification and defining of the pieces of the matrix represented by the current members of the consortium, as well as any glaring gaps that might require recruitment of new/different members to the table.
2. Develop a strategy for how NCLL would design and research a national "State of Nation" on lifelong (science) learning. What should be included? How will it be assessed? Etc.
3. Develop a series of 3 to 5 collaborative research studies that emerge as important issues to understand based upon the lifelong science learning matrix and effectively utilize the intellectual capital represented by consortium members. Blah, blah, blah.

## **10. What else?**